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HOUSTON, TEXAS 77018

Comment to FCC regarding Proceeding No. 03-104

Ladies and Gentlemen:

You have received many comments from amateur radio operators concerned about radio interference from broadband transmission over power lines. I imagine that many of these comments are technically oriented. I have no training in electrical or communications engineering and cannot speak to the technical aspects of the issue. My purpose is to address the human aspect of the problem, which includes issues of homeland security.

I have attached text taken from an AP newswire story available over the internet, which outlines one recent example of the invaluable volunteer assistance with communications that amateur radio operators provide in times of emergency. I understand that ham radio operators gave similar assistance after the attacks that took place on September 11, 2001. Closer to my home, amateur radio operators provided capability for communication to NASA and law enforcement personnel who searched for wreckage and human remains after the space shuttle Columbia disintegrated upon re-entry earlier this year. Ham radio operators in Southeast Texas routinely drill in preparation for weather emergencies such as tropical storms.

In addition to emergency operations, thousands of charitable events (including fun runs and festivals) require the volunteer assistance of ham radio operators to coordinate communications. How many millions of dollars are raised by such events each year around the country?

Clearly, volunteer operators provide an important, although nearly invisible, service to their communities. Our local, state and federal governments would be ill equipped to handle these routine and emergency communications without the volunteer efforts of such operators. What, beyond a sense of humanity and patriotism, motivates individuals to invest their own financial resources and their personal time in such activities?

Amateur radio is a rewarding hobby. Operators can talk to other enthusiasts all over the world. They make friends; they "collect" continents, countries, states and even counties over all the available bands. They nurture friendships in local clubs and work hard to welcome and educate newcomers in the field. Such relationships and "collections" are the only reimbursement available to motivate and reward these volunteers. If current operators lose their reception due to interference from broadband transmissions, they will not be able to communicate efficiently or motivate new operators, and run the risk of "dying out" over the next generation.

I do not have technical training, but I do have experience with volunteer organizations. Anyone who is responsible for a volunteer organization knows that their first responsibility is to keep the volunteers motivated and content. Please remember your responsibility to ham radio and to our communities, and keep in mind the legitimate demands and requirements of the only citizens available to provide voluntary emergency communications. Thank you for your attention.

Cordially,

Kay Lynn Jenkins

cc: Office of Homeland Security, c/o Mr. Jay Kimbrough, Office of Texas Attorney General

Ham Radios Came to Rescue in Blackout

Tue Aug 19, 1:14 PM ET

By STEPHEN SINGER, Associated Press Writer

HARTFORD, Conn. - When technology failed on a massive scale last week, some old-fashioned broadcasting stepped into the breach as ham radio operators took to the airwaves to reach emergency workers.

For millions of people in the Northeast and Midwest, the Aug. 14 outage took access to e-mail and the Internet with it. Landline and cellular telephones were jammed by a crush of calls.

But the ham radio, which came into being in the World War I era, connected firefighters and police departments, Red Cross workers and other emergency personnel during the most extensive blackout in the Northeast since 1977.

Ham operators are not dependent on a server or cell tower, and with battery backups can operate when grids can't.

"When everything else fails, the ham radio is still there," said Allen Pitts, a ham operator in New Britain. "You can't knock out that system."

The radios are operated by a network of volunteers organized by the Newington-based American Radio Relay League.

Ham radio's importance won renewed recognition after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. ARRL won a federal Homeland Security grant of nearly \$182,000 to train amateur radio operators in emergency operations to help during terrorist attacks.

"It's incredible the differences you're seeing, the large cadre of people who know what they're doing," Pitts said. "It's making a major difference."

Tom Carrubba, a coordinator for ARRL in New York City's five boroughs and two counties on Long Island, said volunteers went to work immediately after power went down Thursday afternoon.

"In five minutes guys were on the air with the Red Cross and Office of Emergency Management," he said.

During other disasters, such as severe weather, ARRL volunteers and coordinators activate telephone trees, Carrubba said. On Thursday, they instead hit their assigned frequency or staffed an emergency operations center.

In the New York-Long Island region, with a population of nearly 10 million, about 100 ham radio operators handled the situation, Carrubba said. Some volunteers headed to a Red Cross headquarters or shelter, fire department, or hospital, he said. One hospital was temporarily out of power and ARRL volunteers provided communications to ambulances until electricity was restored.

Carrubba estimated that operators handled 800 to 1,000 communications from Thursday afternoon until early Friday.